

Treviño House
1405 E. Jefferson Street
Cameron County,
Texas

HABS No. TX-3287

HABS
TEX,
31-BROWN,
18

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

TREVIÑO HOUSE

TEX,
31-BROWN,
18

Location: 1405 E. Jefferson Street, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas.

Present Owner: Thom J. Watts, P. O. Box 1673, Brownsville, Cameron County, Texas.

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Jose Torres, Unit No. 1.
Mr. and Mrs. Celso Amaro, Unit No. 2.

Present Use: Private residence.

Significance: The Treviño House, a modest residence built as a rental property between 1910 and 1915, combines architectural elements typical of the area in a spacial fashion. Two units with interior, rear porches, are combined with a central hall to create a U-shaped plan enclosing a narrow courtyard only four and one-half feet wide.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Construction date is probably 1915. Although Mr. Joe Treviño states that as far as he knows 1405 E. Jefferson Street was built "fifteen to twenty" years before 1407 E. Jefferson Street, which was built in 1930, the lot is shown as vacant on the Sanborn Map of 1914. The following year would have been the earliest possible date for the construction of the house.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Treviño House is located on Block 116, Lot 8 of the Original Townsite of Brownsville. An edited chain of title to the property beginning in 1879 is given below. References to the title are found in the Cameron County Clerk's Office, Brownsville, Texas.

1878 Warranty Deed, January 18, 1879, recorded in Supplement E, pages 141-142. Alexander Werbiskie sold Lot 8 to Francisco Yturria for \$250. (Francisco Yturria was married to Felicias Treviño, sister of Indalecio Treviño.)

1912 Confirmation of Deed, recorded February 24, 1912, in Vol. 5, pages 59-60, issued to Isabel Kidder de Treviño, who was the wife of Indalecio Treviño, by Francisco Yturria because records of the original deed of January 31, 1881, had been lost.

1919 Warranty Deed, recorded October 30, 1919, in Vol. 79, pages 301-302. Isabel K. de Treviño sold Lot 8 to her daughter Rita, a single woman, for \$1.00.

This property, along with Lot 9 of Block 116, which had belonged to Isabel Kidder de Treviño's parents, remained in the Treviño family until September 3, 1965, when the Treviño heirs sold both lots to Tom J. Watts and Catherine Watts. This transaction is recorded in Book 790, page 81.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: No original plans known. John P. White, HABS Brownsville Project Supervisor, states that the house appears to have few alterations which suggests that the house was designed as a two-family dwelling from its beginning.
6. Alterations and additions: John White believes that the interior small halls were probably added at a later date.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Indalecio Treviño and his wife, Isabel Kidder de Treviño, who owned the land upon which the house was built, lived for many years at 838 East Levee Street. This structure, also known as the Treviño House, was a much finer building constructed of brick with floor-to-ceiling windows. It had Texas State Medallion No. 380, but was demolished in the 1960s. Isabel Kidder was the daughter of Sanforth Kidder, the interpreter for Colonel William G. Belknap of General Zachary Taylor's Army. Indalecio Treviño was the grandson of Jose Ignacio Treviño who held the original Spanish grant to the San Martín Tract. (Brownsville's Historic Medallion Homes, p. 3.) In 1892, Indalecio Treviño's property was assessed at \$5,000. (Chatfield, p. 25.) Indalecio's sister Felicidas married Francisco Yturria whose biography is included as supplemental information.

According to Domingo Laisea, godson of Rita Treviño, the house was built by Felicidas Yturria as rental property for her niece, Rita. Rita was a daughter of Indalecio and Isabel Kidder Treviño. She remained single and taught Spanish and English classes at San Francisco, which was the boys' school run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the order staffing the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Brownsville. Rita also taught Spanish-speaking people English in private lessons. Many people came over from Matamoros to take lessons from her. Laisea also stated that Felicidas Yturria built the house to provide Rita with enough income so that she would not have to work. However, Rita continued to teach English as a second language even after the house was built.

In the 1913-1914 Brownsville City Directory, Daniel Kidder Treviño and his wife Manuelita are listed as living at 1405 East Jefferson. Joe Treviño, their son, states that he was born in the house in 1930 and that the family moved to the house next door in 1933. The house was vacant for several years after they moved from it.

From 1940-1946, the Brownsville City Directory shows Josefina Garcia Anguerra associated with the property. According to Joe Treviño, she was the sister of the man who married his father's sister, Carlotta, who died in childbirth.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Cameron County Microfilmed Tax Records, Cameron County Courthouse, Brownsville, Texas.

Interviews with Joe Indalecio Treviño, Treviño Funeral Home, at 1300 East Harrison Street, Brownsville, Texas, who is the grandson of Indalecio Treviño. In a telephone conversation on June 24, 1977, Mr. Treviño furnished information about the house and about the Treviño family.

In an interview with Domingo Laiseca, of 925 East 11th Street, Brownsville, Texas, Mr. Laiseca, who is Rita Treviño's godson, contributed information about Rita Treviño and about how the house came to be built. Mr. Laiseca was interviewed on July 19, 1977.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Branda, Eldon S., ed. The Handbook of Texas: A Supplement, Vol. III. Austin: The Texas Historical Association, 1976.

Brownsville City Directory. Asheville, North Carolina: Ernest H. Miller's Piedmont Directory Company, 1914-1914 (Vol. I) and 1929-1930 (Vol. IV).

Brownsville, Texas City Directory. Harlingen, Texas: 1931.

Brownsville's Historical Medallion Homes. Four mimeographed pages without sources found in the Cameron County file in the library of the Institute of Texas Cultures, San Antonio, Texas.

Chatfield, W. H. The Twin Cities of the Border. Originally published in 1893. Reprinted in 1959 by the Harbert Davenport Memorial Fund, the Brownsville Historical Association, and the newer Rio Grande Valley Historical Society. (Folio.)

Sanborn Maps of Brownsville, Texas, dated May 1894, January 1906, and March 1914.

D. Supplemental Information:

From Branda's Supplement to the Handbook of Texas the following has been extracted:

Francisco Yturria, son of Manuel and Paula Navarro (Ortuzu) Yturria, was born in Santander, Tamaulipas, Mexico, in 1832. He was married to Felicitas Treviño, daughter of Ignacio Treviño, an original Spanish grantee of five leagues and two labors in Cameron County; they have two children, a son and a daughter.

Yturria began his business career by working as a clerk for Charles Stillman, one of the founders of Brownsville, and by purchasing lands adjoining those he received through his wife's inheritance. Yturria died in 1912, owning 130,000 acres in Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Kenedy, and Starr counties. He had established and run the Francisco Yturria Bank of Brownsville under private charter, and established another bank in Matamoros. Before the time of the railroad in 1904 Trading was done in Mexican money, but taxes had to be paid in United States money obtained by exchange at the Yturria bank. Silver and gold, in sacks, were stored in a vault there. In the 1960s there was a display of these monies in the lobby of the National Bank of Commerce of Brownsville. The original bank building was still used as an office for the Yturria interests.

Yturria interests included the vast Punta del Monte Rancho which was composed of 72,000 acres of land in Willacy and Kenedy counties. In a later time the ranch headquarters was a stop on the Alice-Brownsville stagecoach line.

Yturria is supposed to have often combined his cattle drives (2,000 steers per year) with those of Richard King, Mifflin Kenedy, and Charles Stillman. It is said the herds required almost three hundred cowhands for the trip to Dodge City. "On these occasions," according to Branda, "Yturria would travel by boat to New Orleans and by train to Kansas, where he sold the cattle; he returned to Texas by way of New York, where he made his deposits in the Hanover National Bank."

During the Civil War Yturria had a monopoly on the sale of cotton through Mexico. He died on July 12, 1912, one of the most influential men of his time in southeast Texas.

Prepared by: Betty Bird
University of Virginia
Project Historian
1977

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an example of a modest two-family dwelling, built in the early part of the twentieth century, and in a style somewhat typical of the area.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Approximately forty-two feet across the four-bay front, the structure is fifty-six feet on the side, U-shaped, one story in height.
2. Foundation: Brick piers have brick footings, with no skirting.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The house is covered in narrow drop siding, painted white on the front, and with traces of ivory on the sides and rear, with corner, rake, and frieze boards.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood frame construction.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Across the principal facade or front is a covered wooden porch supported by six square wood columns, each with a simple molded capital and base. There is a beaded-wood ceiling. Three open-string wooden steps in the center lead to a concrete step at the ground. At the rear of the house, on the inner sides of the U shape, there is a second porch, this one following the U shape, and covered as an extension of the gabled roof. The roof is supported by simple small wooden posts, and has exposed framing on the ceiling. There is a set of four open-string wooden steps leading down from the porch at each end of the U shape.
6. Chimney: There is a brick chimney on the gabled end of each rear extension of the U, which projects through the roof, with three brick courses projecting on top of the chimney.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance in the center of the building through a pair of four-panel wooden doors with a two-light glass transom above each door. The door has wooden surrounds, a wooden sill and threshold, and formerly had screen doors on the exterior. There are wooden frame screen panels across each transom panel with insect and hail screening fabric. A single four-panel wooden door leads from the entry to the rear porch. It has wooden surrounds, wooden threshold, and a two-light glass transom above, with screen panels.

There is a four-panel wooden door with two-light glass transom panel above at each of the three principal rooms in each ell of the U shape that opens onto the rear, U-shaped porch. Some of the doors have operating wood-framed screen doors and some have fixed wood-framed screens.

- b. Windows and shutters: Wooden windows are double-hung, two-over-two-light sashes with wood surrounds. In the hall of each unit is a small, single-hung, two-light sash that slides up into the wall. These are boarded up. There is a similar small single-hung two-light sash at the rear or north wall of the right-hand or No. 2 unit, in the kitchen. Windows have wood-framed screens with insect and hail-screen fabric.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: There is a gable roof over the front portion of the house with the two rear wings or ells of the U shape gabling into it. All roof covering is wood shingles, portions of which have been covered with mineral-surfaced asphalt prepared roll roofing. There is a metal ridge cap.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The eaves are open with a fascia board and the gable ends are open with a simple barge board.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The entrance in the center on the southwest (front) facade opens into an entry. At the left and right sides are doors in the center of the end wall opening into each of the two living units, No 2 on the right, No. 1 on the left. There is a door opposite the main entrance leading to the head of the U-shaped porch surrounding the rear of the structure. Each unit is identical in floor plan. Entering from the entry's end doors one reaches the living room. There are two windows each on the southwest (front) and southwest(side) and southeast (side) walls of the respective units. A door near the north corner of each room leads into a small narrow hallway. On opposing sides of each hallway, in the center, is a doorway to each bath. There is a small high window opening here onto the upper part of the head of the U-shaped porch at the rear. In the bath is a window in the center of each outside wall. In each unit the north ends of the hallway lead into a bedroom which has a door to the exterior of the U-shaped rear porch in the center of the bedroom wall and a window in the opposite wall. Near the center of the north-east wall a doorway leads into a connecting bedroom in each unit. This bedroom has a doorway in the center of the wall leading to the rear porch, with a window opposite on the exterior wall. A doorway near the center of the north wall leads into each kitchen.

The kitchen of each unit has an exterior doorway opening near the center of the north wall onto the rear porch, and a window opposite on each exterior wall. There is a chimney near the center of the kitchen on the northeast wall, extending to the floor, with a flue opening in it. In the right-hand or No. 2 unit there is a small high window on the exterior wall of the kitchen.

2. Flooring: Floors are narrow-board wood flooring, some covered with linoleum.
3. Walls and ceiling finish: Walls have beaded-wood, vertical boarding, with quarter-round molding at the corners, and ceilings have beaded-wood boarding with quarter-round molding at the juncture of walls.
4. Doorways and doors: Doors are four-panel tongue-and-groove wood with wood surrounds. Wood thresholds are at each door in Unit No. 2. There is a two-light transom panel above the doors to the hallway and bath.
5. Notable hardware: There are mortise locksets and top and bottom bolt latch on each entrance door. Each transom panel is operated by a metal transom lift.
6. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: There is no heating device.
 - b. Lighting: Simple porcelain sockets are in most rooms with others having modern electrical fixtures.
 - c. Plumbing: The bathtub in each unit is an oblong porcelain enameled cast-iron tub with feet, and each lavatory is a small porcelain-enameled cast-iron fixture. The water closets are modern.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces southwest from the northeast side of East Jefferson Street, the second house from the corner of 14th Street, and sits between two other residences. There is a small office built directly across the front of the house on the right. Across the street there is commercial property. Several large palm trees stand at the front of the Treviño House, and there are some large trees of another kind in the rear. Part of the rear yard is an asphalt paved area. A barbed wire fence extends across the rear. The side yards also have some trees.

Prepared by: John P. White
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Project Supervisor
1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

At the suggestion of a national preservation consultant, Ellen Beasley, this project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, in cooperation with the Brownsville Historical Association and the Brownsville City Planning Department. Under the direction of John Poppeliars, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1977 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office, Brownsville, Texas, by John P. White (Associate Professor, Texas Technological University) Project Supervisor; Betty Bird (University of Virginia) Project Historian; and Student Assistant Architects Scott Deneroff (University of Maryland), Susan Dornbusch (University of Virginia), Matthew Lowry (University of Pennsylvania), Eduardo Luaces (University of Florida), and Alan Willig (the City College of the City University of New York). Special assistance and support were provided to the HABS team by Mrs. Mary Simmons, Mrs. Sally Fleming, Miss Theresa Champion, and Mr. Calvin Walker of the Brownsville Historical Association; and by Mr. Mario Moreno, Mr. Richard Waldman, Mrs. Graciela Salinas, and Mr. Larry Brown of the Brownsville City Planning Department. Archival photographs of the project were made in February 1979 by Bill Engdahl, of Hedrich-Blessing, Chicago, Illinois. Editing and final preparation of the documentation was carried out in the HABS Washington office by Lucy Pope Wheeler of the HABS professional staff.

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